

CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

TALKING SENSE LECTURE SERIES



The Theory and Practice Behind Japanese “Universal Museum”: Exploring the New Field of Tactile Sensation

Kojiro Hirose

Friday, 15 May 2026

Time: 3:00 – 4:30 PM Eastern

Location: H-1120, Hall Building
Concordia University, Montreal

Abstract: The concept of “universal museum” has evolved uniquely in Japan. In this lecture, Kojiro Hirose will outline the characteristics of research on universal museums in Japan and clarify how they differ from the concepts of inclusion and accessibility in the West. Tactile culture serves as the foundation for the development of universal museums. In this lecture, Hirose explores the significance of tactile culture within the accumulated traditions of Japanese education for the blind while considering the roles played by blind religious and performing artists—such as biwa-hōshi and goze—in premodern society, as well as their contemporary value. By viewing the universal museum within the context of its relationship with society, it becomes possible to define and affirm the mindset required of curators working in museums.

Kojiro Hirose is Professor in the Department of Advanced Human Sciences at the National Museum of Ethnology, and of Anthropological Studies at the Graduate University for Advanced Studies. He was born in Tokyo in 1967 and lost his sight at age 13. A graduate of the Special Needs Education School for the Visually Impaired at the University of Tsukuba he went on to receive his PhD in literature from Kyoto University in 2000. Hirose specializes in Japanese religious history and tactile culture and is currently working on a practical study of the “Universal Museum” (a museum that anyone can enjoy), creating and hosting events centered on the theme of touch throughout Japan. In December 2023, he received the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs Award for an exhibition he curated at the National Museum of Ethnology